

## Pastoral Reflection for the Twenty-fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

September 11, 2022

I couldn't decide whether I would take my theme for this reflection from today's Gospel reading about the prodigal son or the twenty-first anniversary of 9/11. Our collective lessons of 9/11 seem to change over time as the processing of the event gives us new vantage points from which to see it. The biggest difference appears to me now to be that the destruction rained upon us with 9/11 came from without. The destruction of our country and our values in these times, twenty-one years later, appears to be coming from within. Americans have allowed our governmental systems and those who manage them to be so selfishly and politically driven that at all levels—national, state, and local, things are crumbling all around us from the way voting will be done, to the way votes will be counted, to how money gets subverted, to who can make decisions about our bodies, to whether we will cooperate with health department requirements and recommendations, to how we steward the gifts of the earth. We allow processes in which as few as one or two senators can control the passing of bills to confront these erosions, we excuse officials who take personal possession of classified documents, and we allow inexcusable behavior to go unchallenged.

We can't recover documents from Mar-A-Lago or undo a Supreme Court decision. With the up-coming elections, however, it is time for us, like the prodigal son, to come home to our best selves and our values, to make a serious point of studying the issues at every level, to find out as much as we can about the candidates and propoals for which we will have an opportunity to vote, to seek dialogue with informed others about these things and to make time to cast our votes responsibly. Al Qaeda cannot dim the promise of America. Only we can do that to ourselves.

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